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U2 Plane, Dead Pilot In Bolivia

ORURO, Bolivia (AP) — Charred wreckage of the American U2 plane lost Thursday in flight with its pilot presumably unconscious was reported found Friday on a hill in west-central Bolivia.

The pilot was reported dead, his body shattered by the impact of a crash from great altitude.

In La Paz, the U.S. Information Service said that judging from all available evidence the wreckage was that of the missing U2, piloted by Capt. Robert D. Hickman, 32, of Alexandria, La.

A USIS official, Edmund Schechet, said his office in La Paz awaited confirmation from the scene in rugged country 52 miles west of Oruro.

The site is about 2,000 miles southeast of Panama, center of a large-scale U.S. Air Force search for the high-flying plane. The last reported sighting of the U2 Thursday was a radar blip over Panama.

Schechet said an indentification card with Hickman's name was found in the plane and "appears to confirm that it is the U2 plane."

The USIS said the wreckage was found by farmers in the area west of Oruro, which is 140 miles south of La Paz, the Bolivian capital.

Bolivian government search parties accompanied by U. S. Embassy officials, were reported enroute to the scene, near the Peruvian and Chilean borders.

Witnesses said the plane crashed between 3 and 3:30 p.m. (EDT) Thursday. There were unconfirmed reports that it burned before crashing.